

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PROP, PINR, IT, US

SUBJ: L'ESPRESSO ARTICLE IMPLICATING US EMBASSY IN COUP ATTEMPT

1. MASS-CIRCULATION WEEKLY L'ESPRESSO ALLEGED IN OCTOBER 31 ISSUE THAT EMBASSY WAS INVOLVED IN PREPARATIONS FOR ABORTIVE COUP OF 1970, IN THE PERSON OF ASSISTANT MILITARY ATTACHE JAMES CLAVIO, UNDER THE PERSONAL DIRECTION OF THEN AMBASSADOR MARTI. SUB-HEAD FOR ARTICLE STATES "WHILE BORGHESE WAS PREPARING FOR THE COUP, THE MILITARY ATTACHE OF THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WAS DRAWING UP A LIST WITH (FORMER SID DIRECTOR) VITO MICELI OF HIGH OFFICIALS OF OUR ARMY: THOSE AVAILABLE AND THOSE UNAVAILABLE" (IN CASE A COUP BECAME NECESSARY.)

2. ARTICLE FURTHER ALLEGES THAT DOCUMENT EXISTS IMPLICATING THE EMBASSY FORMALLY WITH THE EVENTS OF DECEMBER 7, 1970, DURING WHICH A COUP ATTEMPT WAS ALLEGEDLY IN PROGRESS. THE ARTICLE STATES THAT CLAVIO HAD FOLLOWED CLOSELY THE "ACTIVITIES OF THE CONSPIRATORS IN THE MONTHS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE COUP, WITH THE 'OFFICIAL COVER' OF THEN AMEBASSADOR MARTIN, AND IN CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE HEAD OF SID, GENERAL MICELI."

3. THE ARTICLE ALLEGES "FREQUENT CONTACTS" AMONG MICELI, CLAVIO, AND MARTIN AND THAT CLAVIO HAD INFORMED HIMSELF OF THE ATTITUDES OF VARIOUS KEY MILITARY OFFICERS IN CASE INTERVENTION BY THE ITALIAN

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ARMED FORCES SHOULD BECOME NECESSARY "TO SAVE THE COUNTRY FROM

CONFUSION AND CHAOS."

4. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, CLAVIO SUDDENLY ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM ITALY IN 1971 SHORTLY AFTER AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE AFFAIR HAD BEGUN, AND REAPPEARED LAST JULY (1974), DURING WHICH TIME HE ALLEGEDLY CHANGED HOTELS FIVE TIMES TO AVOID SURVEILLANCE AND ENDED UP IN THE HOME OF GENERAL MICELI. FINALLY, THE ARTICLE STATES CLAVIO LEFT ITALY IN AUGUST WHEN IT HAD BECOME CLEAR THAT THE ANDREOTTI DOSSIER WOULD DEFINITELY GO TO THE AUTHORITIES.

5. FROM THESE ALLEGED FACTS, THE ARTICLE CLEARLY IMPLIES THAT THE EMBASSY WAS INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING OF THE COUP, OR AT THE LEAST WAS FULLY AWARE OF IT. MOST NEWSPAPERS PICKED UP THE ARTICLE AND REPORTED IT PROMINENTLY AND FACTUALLY WITHOUT COMMENT, ALTHOUGH SECTIONS OF THE ARTICLE DEALING WITH THE ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF CLAVIO AND AMBASSADOR MARTIN WERE EMPHASIZED, ESPECIALLY IN PAPERS OF THE LEFT.

6. TO DATE, ONLY QUERIES RECEIVED AT EMBASSY HAVE COME FROM REUTERS, LONDON TIMES, AND FINANCIAL TIMES. WE REPLIED, AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO ON "IF ASKED" BASIS, THAT CLAVIO HAD REGULAR CONTACTS WITH ITALIAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AS PART OF HIS NORMAL DUTIES; THAT WHEN HE WAS ALLEGED TO HAVE ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM ITALY HE WAS IN FACT IN EMBASSY PERFORMING HIS DUTIES; AND THAT WHEN HE RETURNED TO ITALY LAST SUMMER HE WAS PRIVATE CITIZEN WITH NO OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH EMBASSY AND WE ARE AWARE OF NEITHER HIS PRESENT WHEREABOUTS NOR ACTIVITIES. VOLPE

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